

How effective are “toning shoes”?



There are many shoes on the market today that claim to tone muscles, promote healthy weight loss and improve the posture of those who wear them, but do they work?

Toning shoes try to replicate the gentle, heel-to-toe motion of walking on a soft, sandy beach. Manufacturers claim that the instability built into them makes a wearer work harder to maintain his or her balance — effectively giving muscles a more rigorous workout.

But now a growing number of doctors are warning that toning shoes don't deliver on their marketing promises and could cause injuries such as strained Achilles tendons by, among other things, changing a person's gait, or way of walking. Other concerns are injuries because the wearer may have difficulty maintaining balance on the unstable surface.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) asked a team of exercise scientists from the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, to study the shoes, which feature “an unstable sole design” Researchers came up with the following;

“Across the board, none of the toning shoes showed statistically significant increases in either exercise response or muscle activation during any of the treadmill trials,” ACE says. “There is simply no evidence to support the claims that these shoes will help wearers exercise more intensely, burn more calories or improve muscle strength and tone.”

However, the shoes continue to be exceptionally popular with consumers and many companies have glowing testimonials from wearers of their shoes; claiming amongst other things that they are the most comfortable shoes ever worn, have alleviated back pain and have improved posture.